

March 17, 2005

The Honorable Jim Nussle, Chairman  
Committee on Budget  
United States House of Representatives  
Room 309, Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6065

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The American Legion is deeply troubled with and cannot support your Committee's proposed budget resolution, H. Con. Res. 95, with regard to funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), especially the reconciliation instructions targeted at earned veterans' benefits. Reducing mandatory appropriations for veterans' disability compensation, pensions, and educational benefits at a time of war is inconsistent with the thanks of a grateful Nation.

The American Legion believes VA's own admission that the cost of doing business increases annually about 13 – 14 percent because of Federal pay increases and inflation in the health care arena. The President's budget request is "scrubbed" by the Office of Management and Budget, so VA's true fiscal requirements to meet the health care needs of America's veterans are somewhat skewed. During the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, former VA Secretary Principi reported to your colleagues that The FY 2005 proposed budget was \$1.2 billion short of what he had actually requested. It appears this pattern of shortchanging VA medical care continues in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. America's veterans and their families deserve better.

The American Legion recognizes and appreciates the Bradley Amendment adopted by the Committee, but believes it falls well short of the total funding needed in VA medical care. Unfortunately, the Committee rejected the Edwards Amendment that would have provided VA with adequate resources to maintain current services.

The American Legion would encourage adoption of one of the amendments to be offered by Representatives Spratt or Obey with regard to increasing VA funding. Clearly, both of these amendments are in the best interest of veterans and their families. Without adoption of one of these two amendments, The American Legion cannot support this budget resolution.

The American Legion appreciates your leadership and the hard work of your colleagues on behalf of America's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

//Signed//

THOMAS P. CADMUS  
National Commander

CC: Representative Spratt  
Representative Obey